

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 IO-14 INT-08 AID-20 DRC-01 /136 W

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R 150852Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1099

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 1792

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, MARR, RP

SUBJECT: SPRATLYS

1. EXECUTIVE SECRETARY MELCHOR IN COURSE OF "MEET THE PRESS" INTERVIEW RECORDED FEB 10 AND BROADCAST FEB 14, ADVANCED SEVERAL BASES FOR PHILIPPINE CLAIMS TO ISLANDS "EAST OF SPRATLYS."

2. FIRST AND FOREMOST BASIS IS SECURITY. ISLANDS ARE CLOSER TO PHILIPPINES THAN TO OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES. GEOGRAPHIC PROPINQUITY OF ISLANDS CONSEQUENTLY RAISED QUESTION RELATED TO PHILIPPINE "SURVIVAL." IN RESPONSE TO FURTHER QUESTION HE SAID "IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO OCCUPY THE ISLANDS," AND HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT CLAIM TO ISLANDS BASED IN FACT ON OCCUPATION. HE NOTED IN PASSING THAT JAPANESE HAD CEDED ISLANDS IN 1951, THAT DISTRIBUTION OF ISLANDS HAD NOT BEEN RESOLVED BY THE ALLIES BUT...."THE FACT IS WE ARE OCCUPYING THESE ISLANDS EAST OF THE SPRATLYS."

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3. HE REFUSED TO ANSWER QUESTION ON HOW MANY ISLANDS WERE OCCUPIED, LEAVING THAT TO DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. HE SAID GOP HAD PLACED PEOPLE ON ISLANDS AS EARLY AS 1967 TO HELP MAINTAIN NAVIGATION AIDS STATION.

4. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT PHILIPPINES HAS ASKED ITSELF WHAT ARE CAPABILITIES OF SOUTH VIET-NAMESE AND PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA TO LAUNCH ACTIVITIES IN SPRATLY AREA. WHEN ASKED HOW SEATO ALLIANCE WOULD RELATE TO SITUATION IN ISLANDS IF HOT WAR BROKE OUT, MELCHOR SAID THAT SEATO MEMBERS WOULD RESPOND IN RESPECT TO HOW EACH VIEWED ITS NATIONAL INTERESTS.

5. SECOND BASIS FOR CLAIM WAS FACT PHILIPPINES "ASSUMED AN INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATION AS FAR AS SAFE NAVIGATION OF COMMERCE IN THIS AREA" WHEN US TURNED OVER TO GOP TWO US COAST GUARD LORAN STATIONS. PART OF AGREEMENT WAS THAT US WOULD "ASSIST US AND SUPPORT US IN MAINTAINING THESE STATIONS". GOP DOES NOT ITSELF "USE LORAN IN ITS SHIPS, NOR HAVE INTER ISLAND TRAFFIC WEST OF PALAWAN," AND "WE ARE DOING THIS AS SERVICE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY." MELCHOR NOTED THAT LORAN STATIONS WERE (TALAMPULAN ISLAND AND TARAMPITAO POINT) BOTH LOCATED ON WEST COAST OF PALAWAN. WHEN ASKED WHETHER MAINTENANCE OF LORAN FACILITIES MEANT THAT US WAS BACKING PHILIPPINES, SECRETARY MELCHOR SAID "THAT IS YOUR INFERENCE, NOT MINE."

6. MELCHOR SOMEWHAT OFF HANDEDLY ACKNOWLEDGED A POSSIBLE THIRD BASIS FOR THE PHILIPPINE CLAIMS--ECONOMICS. HE SAID THAT HE DID NOT DISCOUNT OIL AND OTHER MINERALS AS IMPORTANT FACTORS BUT HE PLACED PRIMARY EMPHASIS ON SECURITY.

7. MELCHOR NOTED THAT ADAM MALIK HAD TAKEN COGNIZANCE OF SPRATLY SITUATION AND HAD HELPFULLY SUGGESTED GOING TO INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE RATHER THAN TO UNITED NATIONS. (GOP HAS ALREADY BROUGHT ISSUE TO UN.)

8. COMMENT: SECRETARY MELCHOR IS WELL BRIEFED ON THE SPRATLYS ISSUE AS FAR AS PHILIPPINE INVOLVEMENT AND INTERESTS ARE CONCERNED. HIS EXPOSITION OF CLAIMS BASED ON FACTORS OF GEOGRAPHIC PROPINQUITY, INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS RELATED

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TO LORAN, AND ECONOMICS ARE SOMEWHAT AT VARIANCE WITH MORE LEGALISTIC CLAIM ADVANCED BY DFA BASED ON RES NULLIUS. IN FACT AT OUTSET OF DISCUSSION MELCHOR REJECTED TOMAS CLOMA CLAIMS AS NOT RELEVANT TO SITUATION. HIS EMPHASIS ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND RIGHTS BY OCCUPATION, WHILE NOT BELLICOSE, MAY WELL REPRESENT MORE FUNDAMENTAL BASIS OF PHILIPPINE CLAIMS TO ISLANDS OF WHICH RES NULLIUS IS ONLY INTENDED TO BE LEGAL TRAPPING.

SULLIVAN

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Message Attributes

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